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MARVEL TEAM-UP

FEATURING

TNE

THE HUMAN TORCH

AND

THOR

THE FIRE THIS TIME!

FEATURING:
THE LETHAL
LEGIONS OF THE

LAVA MAN

STAN LEE PRESENTS: THE HUMAN TORCH AND THOR -- TOGETHER!

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ONE LEARNS A GOOD MANY TRICKS WHEN ONE IS IN THE SUPER-HERO TRADE-- WALL-CRAWLING, SHIELD-SLINGING, LIMB-STRETCHING, SPELL-CASTING-- WELL, YOU GET THE POINT.

FOR EXAMPLE, IF ONE IS THE HIGH-FLYING HUMAN TORCH, ONE DEVELOPS ALMOST EAGLE-LIKE VISION, ALL THE BETTER TO SEE THINGS WITH WHILE SOARING THRU THE CLOUD-STREAKED SKIES.

SO WHEN THE INCENDIARY JOHNNY STORM NOTICES SOMETHING A TRIFLE-- ER-- UNUSUAL ON THE HIGH-DESERTED MIDTOWN STREET BELOW, HE SWOOPS DOWN TO TAKE A LOOK.

THE FIRE THIS TIME...!

YEP--THOSE ARE FLAMING FOOTPRINTS ALL RIGHT--

--AND THEY SURE AS BLAZES AREN'T MINE!

CURIOUSER AND
CURIUSER,
AS THAT
WONDERLAND
CHICK ONCE
SAID.



THE
FOOTPRINTS
COME
RIGHT UP
OUT OF THAT
SEWER--

--AND LEAD INTO THIS
DEAD-END ALLEY.

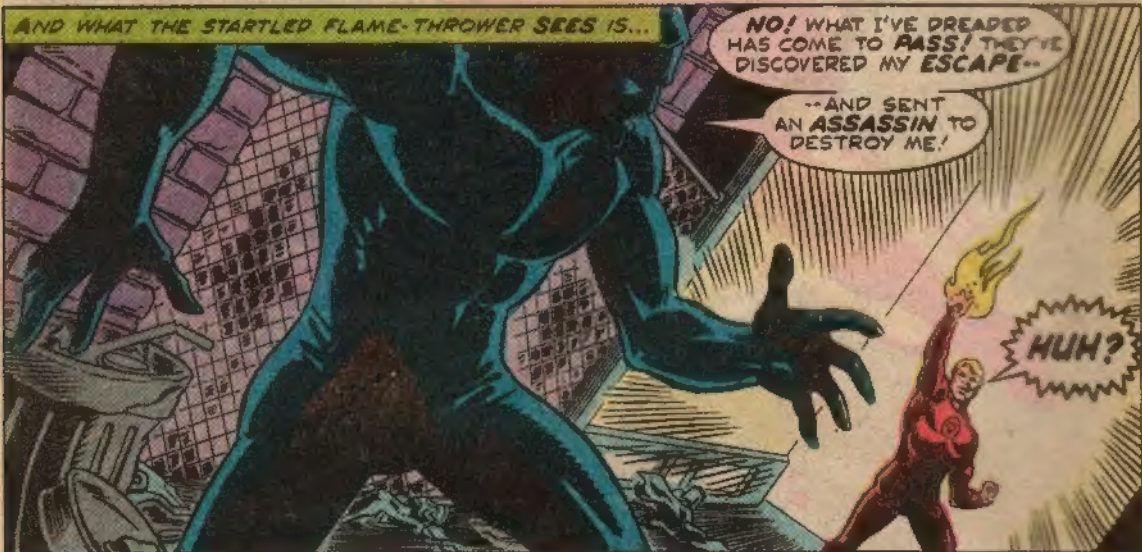
WHEW-- IT'S BLACK
AS PITCH IN THERE.



BETTER SHED A LITTLE
LIGHT ON THE SUBJECT
--TO SEE WHAT I CAN
SEE!



AND WHAT THE STARTLED FLAME-THROWER SEES IS...



NO! WHAT I'VE DREADED
HAS COME TO PASS! THEY'VE
DISCOVERED MY ESCAPE--

--AND SENT
AN ASSASSIN TO
DESTROY ME!

HUH?



HEY-- HOLD IT,
BUSTER! I DON'T
KNOW WHAT YOU'RE
JABBERING
ABOUT, BUT...
WHA--?

KILLER--
YOU'LL NOT LIVE
TO TAKE ME BACK
TO THEM!

HOLY COW?!
THAT RAY FROM HIS
HAND-- COVERING ME
WITH SOME SORT OF
CLINGING CINDERS!



I'M TRAPPED--
IN A CONCRETE
COCOON!



GLUNK!

WHAT ELSE DID YOU EXPECT--WHEN THE ONE YOU SO BLATANTLY ATTACKED IS CALLED-- THE

LAVA MAN!

MY MASTERS?
HEY--HANG ON,
JOY-BOY!

I THINK
WHAT WE HAVE
HERE IS A CASE OF
MISTAKEN IDENTITY!

I KNOW NOT HOW
YOU FOUND ME--
BUT WHEN YOU
REPORT BACK TO
YOUR MASTERS,
YOU CAN TELL
THEM...

NO--
YOU'RE LYING
--TRYING TO
TRICK ME--!

LOOK, WHY DON'T
WE CALL A
TRUCE--

--AND TALK THIS
MESS OUT BETWEEN
US--

--CAUSE IF YOU
DON'T LET ME
OUT--

--OF THIS BLASTED
BASALT STRAIT-
JACKET--

--MISTER,
YOU'RE GONNA
MAKE ME
MAD!

GLAD YOU NOTICED THAT, FELLA! MAYBE NOW YOU REALIZE THAT I'M SERIOUS!

WILL YOU STAY PUT
FOR A MINUTE AND
LISTEN TO ME?

NEVER--NOT
SO LONG AS THERE
IS BREATH WITHIN
MY BODY!

INCREDIBLE!
THE AWESOME HEAT
YOU GENERATE MADE MY
LAVA SHEATH SO
BRITTLE--IT
SHATTERED!

WELL, IF THAT'S
THE CASE,
BUSTER--

PLAMM

UUNNGGH!

--I
SUPPOSE I'LL JUST
HAVE TO KNOCK THE
BREATH CLEAN OUT OF YOU!

A LAVA MAN IS NOT SO EASILY DEFEATED, FLAMING ONE--

--NOT WHEN SUCH A FAILURE COULD MEAN THE END OF THIS VERY WORLD!

BROK!

HUNH??

W-WHAT THE DEVIL DO YOU MEAN BY THAT?

MISTER, IF YOU'RE SERIOUS, YOU'D BETTER TELL ME WHAT'S GOING ON!

YOU DO NOT KNOW? THEN YOU ARE NOT AN AGENT OF MY PEOPLE!

A SHAME I DISCOVER THAT NOW--

--FOR I NO LONGER HAVE ANY TIME TO WASTE ON YOU!

STAND ASIDE, FLAMING ONE--

--OR YOU WILL FORCE ME--

--TO DESTROY--

--YUWUUG

HUH?

MAN, YOU'RE REALLY HURT! WHY IN BLAZES DIDN'T YOU SAY SOMETHING?

IT WOULD MAKE LITTLE DIFFERENCE IF I HAD, BOY--

--FOR I AM NOT MERELY HURT--I AM DYING!

DYING?
NO! IS THERE ANYTHING--
ANYTHING I CAN DO TO HELP YOU?

ONLY AID ME IN COMPLETING MY MISSION HERE.

IT IS IMPERATIVE I SPEAK TO THE ONE CALLED THOR--OR YOUR WORLD WILL END IN FIRE!

I'LL DO WHAT I CAN, PAL--I PROMISE YOU THAT!

CUT: TO A CHECKERED CAB SPEEDING THRU THE DARK MANHATTAN STREETS.

...SO I SEZ TO LOUIE... LOUIE, I SEZ...

...THEY WANNA SOLVE THE TRAFFIC CONGESTION IN THIS CRUMMY BURG...

...ALL THEY GOTTA DO IS MAKE ALL THE STREETS ONE-WAY POINTIN' WEST...

...AN' IN A COUPLE'A WEEKS, ALL THAT TRAFFIC'LL BE JERSEY'S HEADACHE! BUT LOUIE... HE SEZ TO ME...

HEY-- WILL YA LOOK AT THAT!?!
WHAT IS IT, DRIVER? SOMETHING WRONG?

WHY DON'CHA TAKE A GANDER OUT TH' WINDOW, CHUM? MAYBE YOU CAN TELL ME!

THOR wuznt here
meat me atop
Liberty
Loddy Torch

GOOD LORD!
A MESSAGE FOR THE THUNDER GOD FROM THE HUMAN TORCH--

--AND THERE'S NO WAY THOR CAN ANSWER THAT SUMMONS-- UNLESS DR. DONALD BLAKE SACRIFICES HIS EVENING'S APPOINTMENTS.

CABBIE, LET ME OFF AT THE NEXT CORNER! IT SEEMS I'M NOT GOING TO THE HOSPITAL TONIGHT, AFTER ALL.

AN EMERGENCY HAS SUDDENLY COME UP!

HAVE TO FIND A SHADOWED ALLEYWAY-- AND QUICKLY. NOBODY MUST SEE ME MAKE THE CHANGE.

HEY, MISTER --YER CHANGE!

YA FERGOT TA TAKE YER CHANGE!

AHHH-- BEANS! THAT GUY IS DEAF TO THE WORLD!

LOUIE WUZ RIGHT! MOST'A THEM DOCTOR-TYPES ARE IN WORSE SHAPE THAN THEIR PATIENTS!

EVERYBODY'S SCREWY IN THIS COCKAMAMIE TOWN.

AND WHILE THE BELEAGUERED CAB-DRIVER MOVES OFF IN SEARCH OF SAFER FARES, DR. DON BLAKE HOBBOLES INTO THE FIRST DARKENED ALLEYWAY HE COMES UPON--



--KNEELS AS IF IN SILENT SUPPLICATION--

--THEN STRIKES HIS WOODEN WALKING STICK ONCE AGAINST THE PAVEMENT--



--AND RISES, NOT AS A LAME PHYSICIAN, BUT AS THE GOD OF THUNDER, THE LORD OF THE STORM AND THE LIGHTNING--



--THE MIGHTY THOR!

THE TRANSFORMATION COMPLETE THE NOBLE ASGARDIAN WHIRLS HIS MYSTIC MALLET MJOLNIR ABOUT HIS HEAD-- THEN TAKES TO THE MOONLIT SKY.



NOT WHAT NEED THE YOUTHFUL TORCH DOTH HAVE OF ME--

--BUT WHATE'ER IT BE, THE HEIR TO THE THRONE OF THE REALM ETERNAL SHALL NOT BE FOUND WANTING!

AND MOMENTS LATER, ATOP THE GREAT STATUE THAT DOMINATES LIBERTY ISLAND...



SALUTATIONS, JOHNNY STORM.

WHY HAST THOU SUMMONED THE SON OF ODIN IN SUCH FLAMBOYANT FASHION THIS FINE SUMMER'S NIGHT?

GOOD QUESTION, THUNDER GOD.

GOT A FELLA HERE WHO SAYS HE KNOWS YOU-- AND WANTS TO TALK TO YOU--

--ABOUT THE END OF THE WORLD-- OR SOME SUCH PETTY THING.



MOLTO, MY GOOD FRIEND! HOW FAREST THOU?

NOT WELL, THOR-- HE'S DYING! IN FACT...

PLEASE --DO NOT SPEAK-- MERELY LISTEN!

FOR I HAVE MUCH TO TELL-- AND LITTLE TIME TO TELL IT!

"IT'S BEEN MANY MONTHS, THOR, SINCE THE LAVA MEN--SPURRED ON BY OUR WITCH DOCTOR JINKU--ATTEMPTED TO ATTACK THE SURFACE WORLD--



"--ONLY TO BE DRIVEN BACK TO DARKNESS BY YOU AND YOUR FELLOW AVENGERS!"

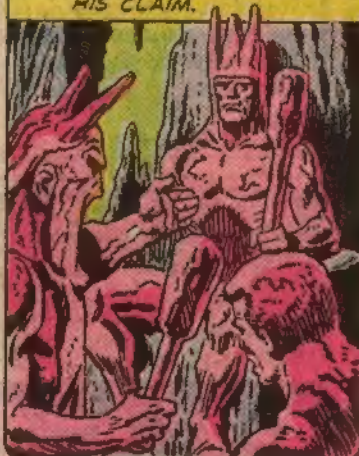
"IT HAPPENED IN AVENGERS #5, IF YOU CAN REMEMBER THAT FAR BACK.--GERIATRIC ROY.

"SINCE THEN, WE HAVE LIVED IN PEACE-- UNTIL A SUPPOSED VISION CAME TO JINKU IN HIS DREAMS--



"--PROMISING TO LEAD OUR PEOPLE TO CONQUEST!"

"JINKU WASTED NO TIME IN DESCRIBING HIS 'VISION' TO OUR CHIEF-- AND THOUGH I DISPUTED IT LOUDLY, JINKU WON THE ARGUMENT BY STATING HE COULD PROVE HIS CLAIM.

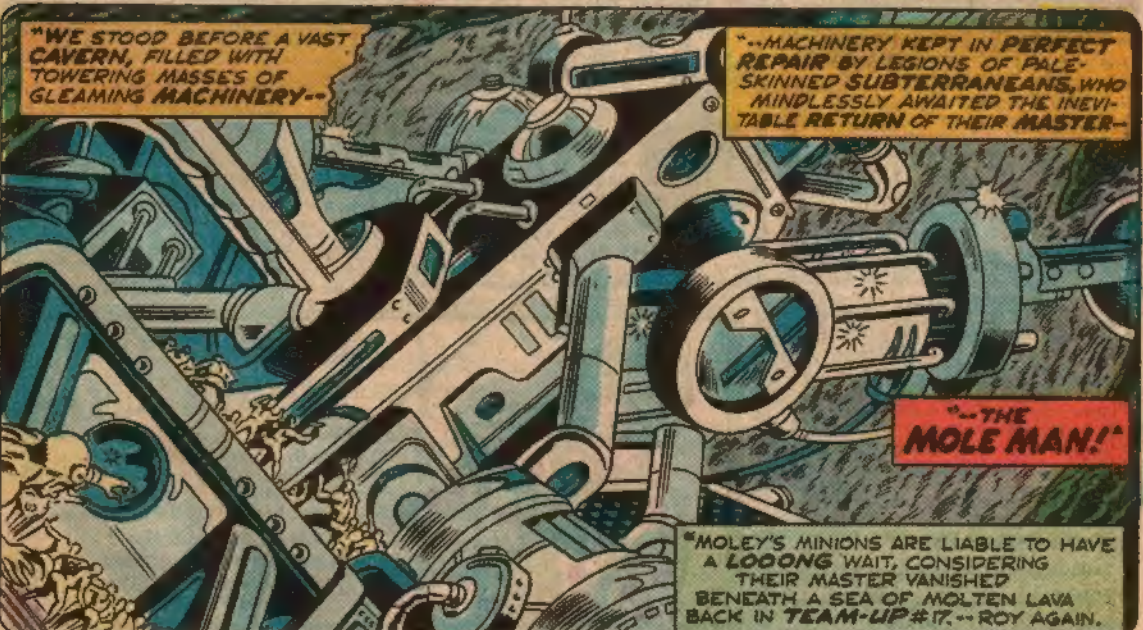


"AS IF DIRECTED BY SOME UNSEEN PRESENCE, JINKU LED US THRU DARK TWISTING TUNNELS, UNTIL, AT LAST...



THERE! DO YOU SEE? IS IT NOT AS I'VE DESCRIBED IT?

"WE STOOD BEFORE A VAST CAVERN, FILLED WITH TOWERING MASSES OF GLEAMING MACHINERY--



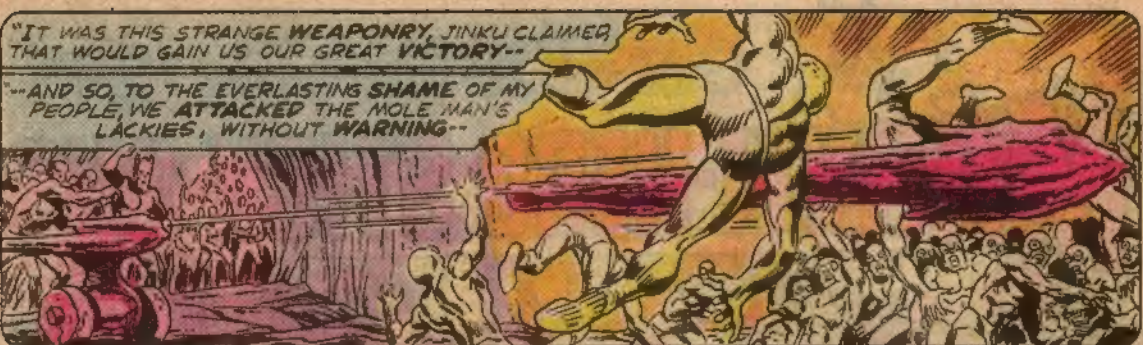
"--MACHINERY KEPT IN PERFECT REPAIR BY LEGIONS OF PALE-SKINNED SUBTERRANEANS, WHO MINDLESSLY AWAITED THE INEVITABLE RETURN OF THEIR MASTER--

"--THE MOLE MAN!"

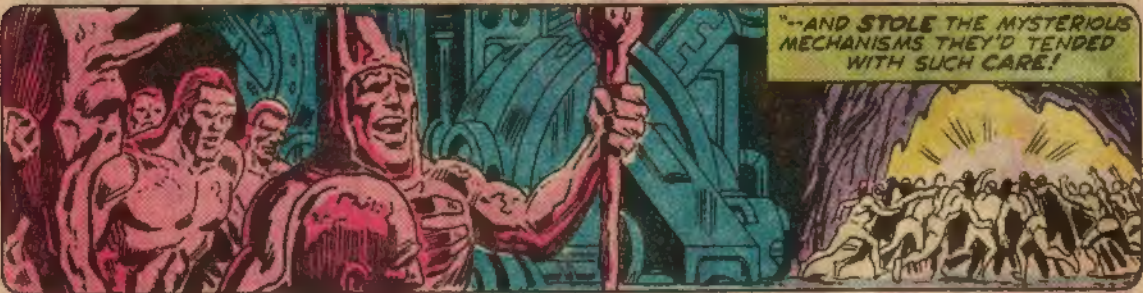
"MOLEY'S MINIONS ARE LIABLE TO HAVE A LOOONG WAIT, CONSIDERING THEIR MASTER VANISHED BENEATH A SEA OF MOLTEN LAVA BACK IN TEAM-UP #17.--ROY AGAIN.

"IT WAS THIS STRANGE WEAPONRY, JINKU CLAIMED THAT WOULD GAIN US OUR GREAT VICTORY--"

"--AND SO, TO THE EVERLASTING SHAME OF MY PEOPLE, WE ATTACKED THE MOLE MAN'S LACKIES, WITHOUT WARNING--"



"--AND STOLE THE MYSTERIOUS MECHANISMS THEY'D TENDED WITH SUCH CARE!"



"I SHUDDERED IN HORROR AS JINKU EXPLAINED HOW THE MACHINERY WOULD BE USED TO SIMULTANEOUSLY ACTIVATE EVERY VOLCANO ON EARTH--THUS DROWNING THE SURFACE WORLD BENEATH A FLOOD OF MOLTEN MAGMA THAT WOULD AFFECT US NOT AT ALL."



"BRIEF HOURS AGO, I SNEAKED AWAY FROM THE OTHERS, DETERMINED TO WARN YOU, BEFORE IT WAS TOO LATE--"



"--BUT MY ABSENCE HAD NOT GONE UNNOTICED!"



"THE RADIOACTIVE ENERGY OF JINKU'S STAFF CHILLED ME TO MY SOUL. I FELT --AND THE WITCH DOCTOR STALKED AWAY, BELIEVING ME DEAD--"



"--BUT HE WAS NOT QUITE CORRECT!"



"SOMEWHERE DEEP WITHIN ME, I DISCOVERED UNTAPPED STRENGTH --STRENGTH WHICH ENABLED ME TO DRAG MYSELF UP TO YOUR CITY--"



"--IN SEARCH OF YOU, THOR, MY GOOD FRIEND!"

TONIGHT... AT THIS VERY MOMENT... JINKU TESTS HIS NEW-FOUND WEAPONRY UPON MAUNA LOA IN THE HAWAIIAN ISLANDS!

STOP HIM... I BEG YOU... OR ELSE I'LL HAVE DIED IN VAINNN...

MOLTO...?

HE'S GONE, THOR.

THEN, LIKE A LEAF AT SUMMER'S END, THE LAVA MAN CRUMBLES INTO BRITTLE DUST--

--TO BE BORNE AWAY TO A BRIGHTER, BETTER PLACE--

--FOR, IF THE LAVA MEN BELIEVE IN ANY SORT OF HEAVEN, MOLTO HAS SURELY EARNED A SEAT THERE.

FARE THEE WELL, MY FRIEND.

THEY SHALL SING THY PRAISES IN VALHALLA.

WHAT NOW, THUNDER GOD? THAT'S QUITE A STORY YOUR FRIEND LAID ON US.

AYE, JOHNNY STORM-- BUT 'TIS A STORY WITHOUT AN ENDING--

--AND METHINKS 'TIS UP TO US TO DEVISE A PROPERLY BEFITTING ONE.

PREPARE THYSELF, YOUTH, WHILST I WHIRL MINE MYSTIC HAMMER--

WE CAN'T BE WHERE I THINK WE ARE!

--TO CREATE A WARP OF TIME AND SPACE THAT FEW SAVE THE HUMAN TORCH AND THE MIGHTY THOR COULD DARE HOPE TO SURVIVE!

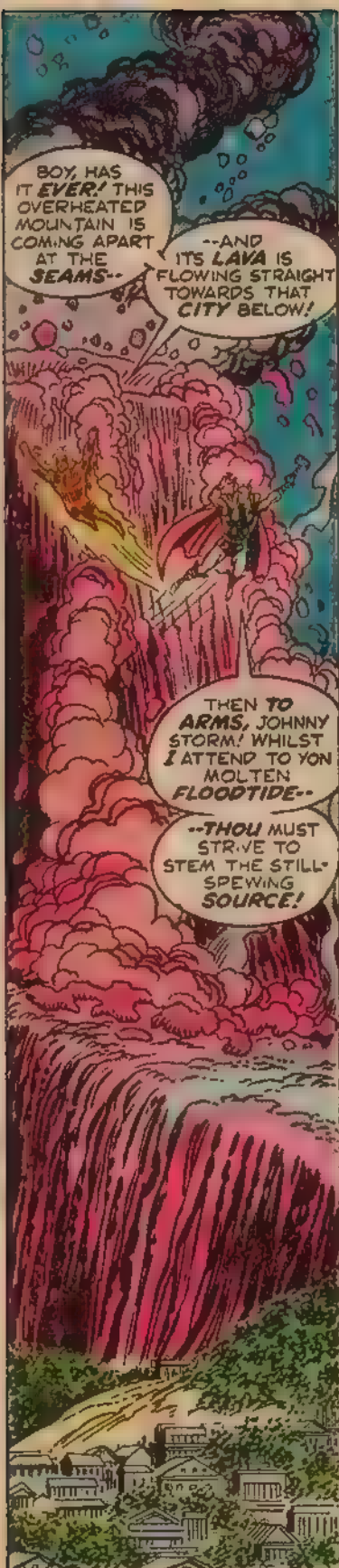
HOLY MACKERAL! I SEE IT-- BUT I DON'T BELIEVE IT!

KWA-ROOM!

AYE, JOHNNY STORM. WE ARE INDEED ABOVE THE ISLAND OF HAWAII--

--AND THAT VIOLENTLY SEETHING CAULDRON JUST BELOW US IS THE VOLCANO CALLED MAUNA LOA!

IT DOETH SEEM THE LAVA MEN'S TESTING HATH ALREADY BEGUN!



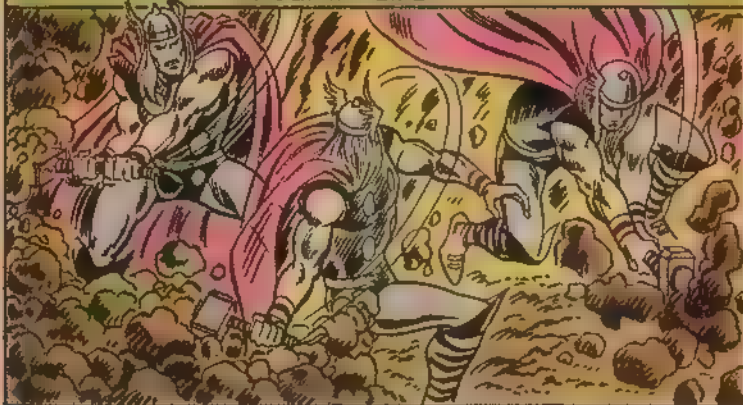
BOY, HAS IT EVER! THIS OVERHEATED MOUNTAIN IS COMING APART AT THE SEAMS--

--AND ITS LAVA IS FLOWING STRAIGHT TOWARDS THAT CITY BELOW!

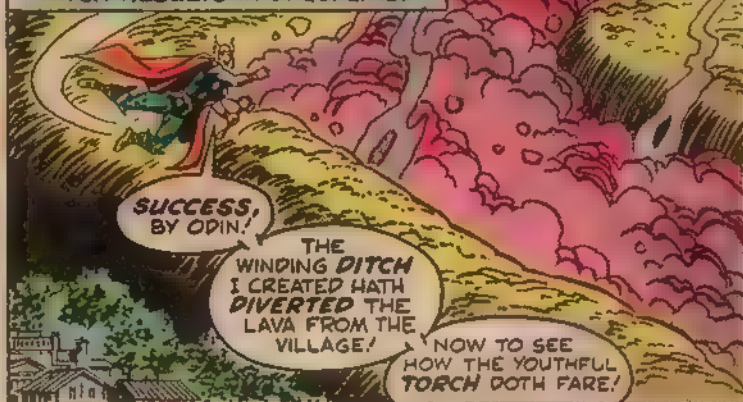
THEN TO ARMS, JOHNNY STORM! WHILST I ATTEND TO YON MOLTEN FLOODTIDE--

--THOU MUST STRIVE TO STEM THE STILL-SPEWING SOURCE!

THEN, ALMOST FASTER THAN MERE MORTAL EYES CAN FOLLOW, THE GOD OF THUNDER CARVES AN AWESOME SCAR INTO THE MOUNTAIN SIDE--



--WHICH RESULTS IN UNQUALIFIED--

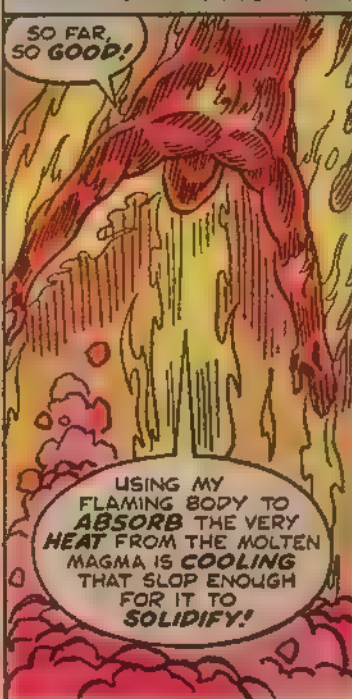


SUCCESS, BY ODIN!

THE WINDING DITCH I CREATED HATH DIVERTED THE LAVA FROM THE VILLAGE!

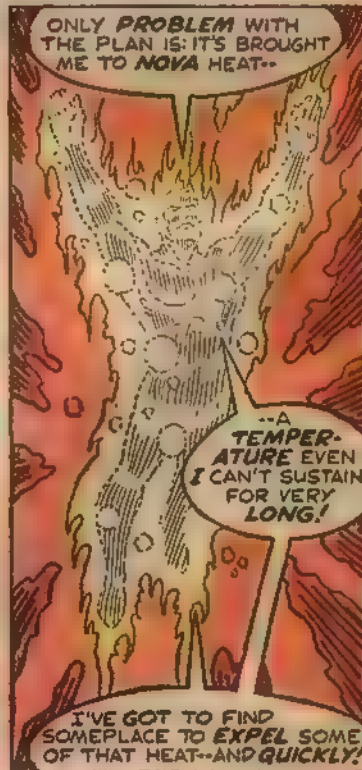
NOW TO SEE HOW THE YOUTHFUL TORCH DOTHS FARE!

YOU DON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT HIM, ASGARDIAN. JOHNNY IS DOING JUST FINE...



SO FAR, SO GOOD!

USING MY FLAMING BODY TO ABSORB THE VERY HEAT FROM THE MOLTEN MAGMA IS COOLING THAT SLOP ENOUGH FOR IT TO SOLIDIFY!



ONLY PROBLEM WITH THE PLAN IS: IT'S BROUGHT ME TO NOVA HEAT--

--A TEMPERATURE EVEN I CAN'T SUSTAIN FOR VERY LONG!

I'VE GOT TO FIND SOMEPLACE TO EXPEL SOME OF THAT HEAT--AND QUICKLY!

AND WHAT BETTER PLACE THAN...

THE EVER-LOVIN' VOLCANO ITSELF!

THE HEAT I'M DIRECTING AT THE CRATER IS SO INTENSE, IT'S FUSING THE MOLTEN ROCK SHUT!

BUT THAT STILL HASN'T STOPPED THE ERUPTION!

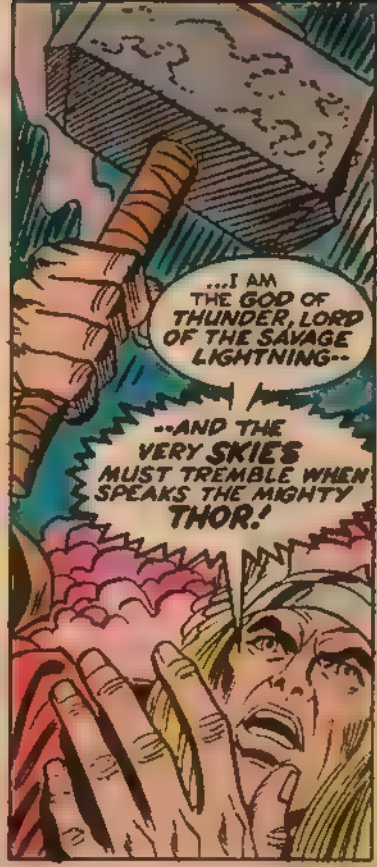
LOOKS LIKE I'M GONNA NEED SOME HELP ON THIS!

IF SUCH IS THY NEED, LAD--THE SON OF ODIN SHALL GLADLY FILL IT!

THANKS FOR THE OFFER, GOLDBLOCKS--

--BUT WHAT COULD YOU DO TO THIS OVER-SIZED POT-BOILER THAT I CAN'T?

THOU DOST FORGET, JOHNNY STORM...



...I AM THE GOD OF THUNDER, LORD OF THE SAVAGE LIGHTNING--

--AND THE VERY SKIES MUST TREMBLE WHEN SPEAKS THE MIGHTY THOR!



COME, YE RAINS! COME, YE HOWLING WINDS!

COME YE, TO QUENCH THE UNQUENCHABLE FLAME THAT DOTH BURN SO UNNATURALLY BOLD!

COME YE-- TO DO THE BIDDING OF THY RIGHTFUL LORD AND MASTER!

HOLY SMOKE! YOU BANG THAT CRAZY HAMMER TWICE ON THE GROUND-- AND SOMEBODY PUMPS NIAGARA FALLS ON US!

HOW THE DEVIL DID YOU MANAGE THAT?



WHAT MATTER THOR'S METHODS, LAD-- WHEN OUR PURPOSE HATH BEEN SO ABLY SERVED!

SWELL, SO NOW ALL WE'VE GOT TO DO IS FIND THE CREEPS RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS.

THE VOLCANO MAUNA LOA SHALL THREATEN THE PEOPLE OF THIS ISLAND NO LONGER!

HISSSSSSS

METHINKS MYSTIC MJOLNIR
DOTH STRIVE TO SHOW US
THE WAY, LAD.

IT HATH DETECTED STRANGE
EMANATIONS RISING FROM THE
VERY EARTH BENEATH OUR FEET--

--AND I TRUST 'TWOULD BE
TO OUR ADVANTAGE TO
PURSUE SUCH EMANATIONS
TO THEIR SOURCE!

THUD!

RIGHT
BEHIND YOU,
THOR.

YOU JUST KEEP
DIGGING-- AND
I'LL WELD THE
PASSAGE SMOOTH
AS WE GO.

WOULDN'T
WANT THE
THING TO
CAVE IN
ON US.

WELL DONE,
LAD-- BUT UN-
NECESSARY.

FOR THE
EARTH
AHEAD DOTH
RUMBLE-- AS
IF WITH THE
THRUM
OF MOST
POWERFUL
ENGINES!

AND IF SUCH
BE SO--

--THEN WE
HAVE REACHED
OUR JOURNEY'S
END!

BEHOLD!
THOR
COMES--

--AND A
BEING OF
FLAME
ACCOMPANIES
HIM!

TO THE ATTACK,
MY BRETHREN!
THOR AND
HIS COMPANION
MUST BE
QUICKLY
DEFEATED!

NEVER,
JINKU!

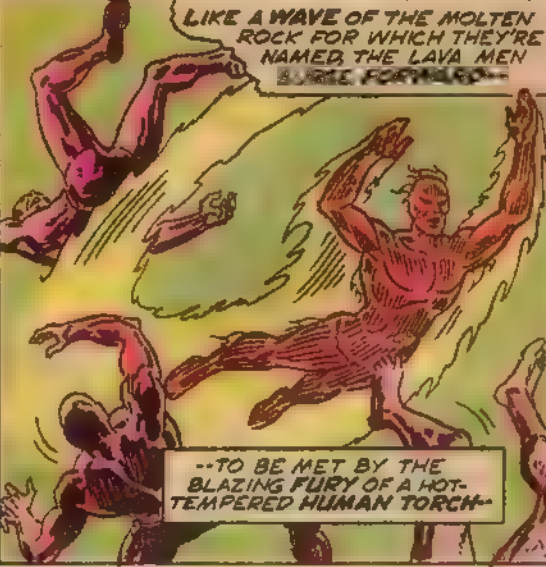
WHILST STILL THERE
BE LIFE WITHIN THE
GOD OF THUNDER--

THOR DOTH
SAY THEE
NAY!

AND THAT GOES
DOUBLE FOR
ME, CHUM!

CHOOM!

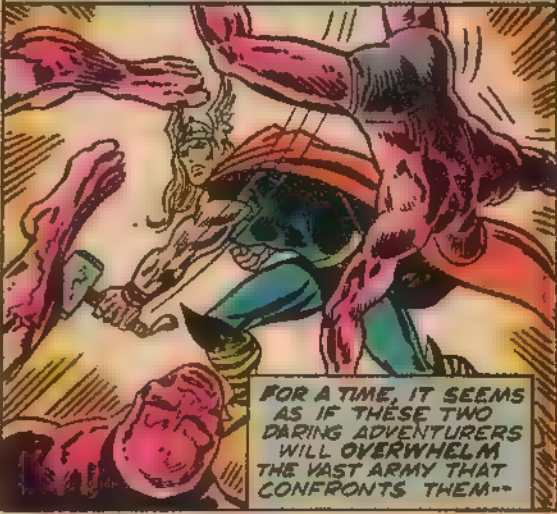
SKRAK!

A group of muscular, red-skinned lava men are surging forward. One in the center has his arms raised in a triumphant or aggressive pose. The background is a bright, yellowish-green, suggesting a volcanic environment.

LIKE A WAVE OF THE MOLTEN
ROCK FOR WHICH THEY'RE
NAMED, THE LAVA MEN
BURGE FORWARD--

--TO BE MET BY THE
BLAZING FURY OF A HOT-
TEMPERED HUMAN TORCH--

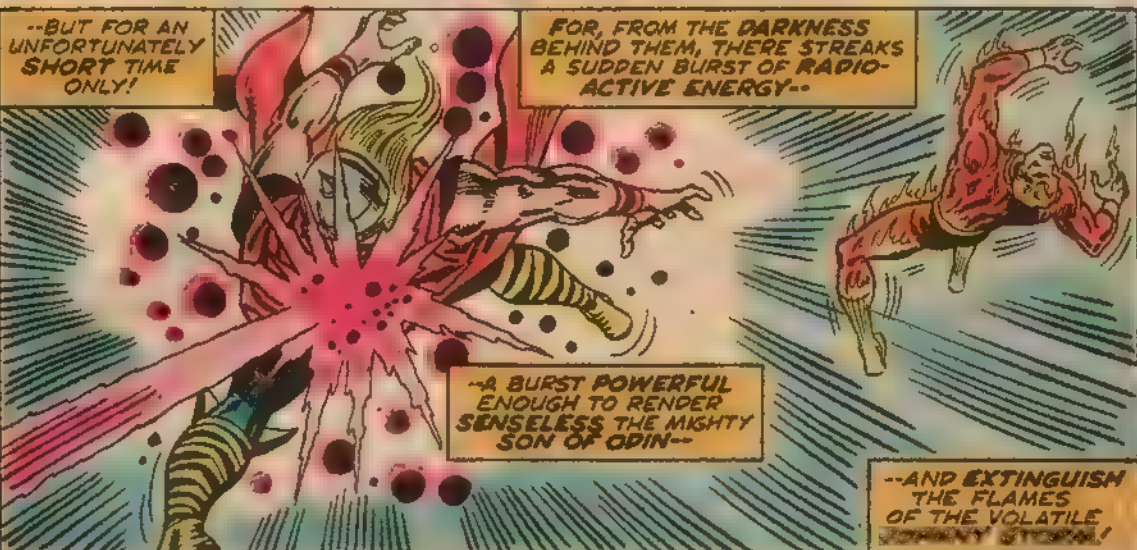
--AND THE IRRESISTIBLE HAMMER OF AN
EQUALLY GRIM THUNDER GOD!

Thor, with his long blonde hair and red cape, is in a dynamic pose, swinging his hammer. Iron Man is also present, with his chest glowing. They are surrounded by lava men. One lava man is in the foreground, looking up at them.

FOR A TIME, IT SEEMS
AS IF THESE TWO
DARING ADVENTURERS
WILL OVERWHELM
THE VAST ARMY THAT
CONFRONTS THEM--

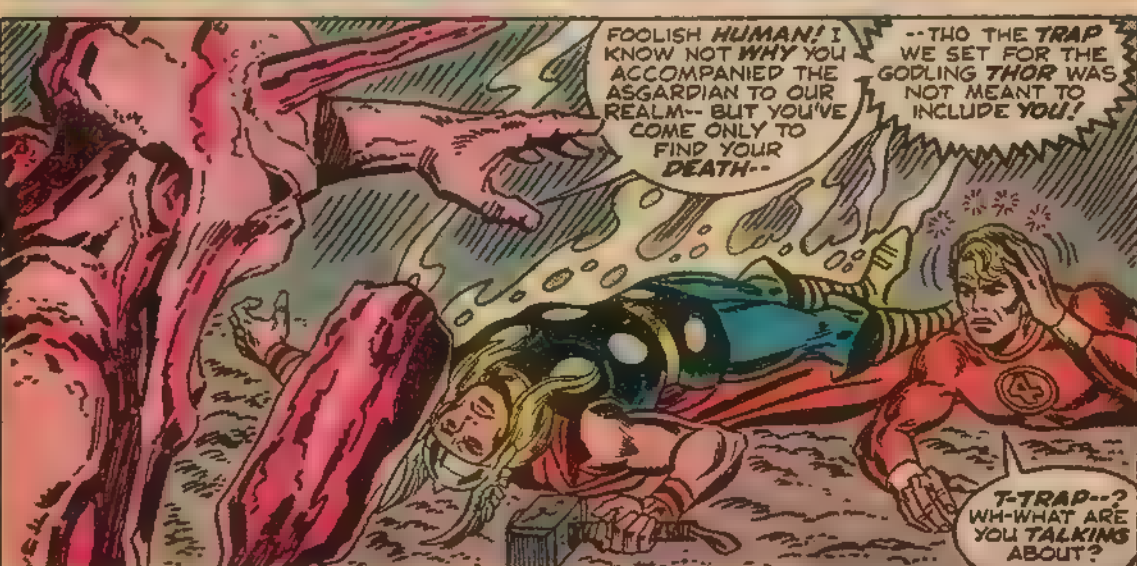
--BUT FOR AN
UNFORTUNATELY
SHORT TIME
ONLY!

FOR, FROM THE DARKNESS
BEHIND THEM, THERE STREAKS
A SUDDEN BURST OF RADIO-
ACTIVE ENERGY--

A massive, starburst-like explosion of pink and red energy erupts from the center. Several lava men are being thrown back by the force. Iron Man is visible on the right, looking towards the source of the energy.

--A BURST POWERFUL
ENOUGH TO RENDER
SENSELESS THE MIGHTY
SON OF ODIN--

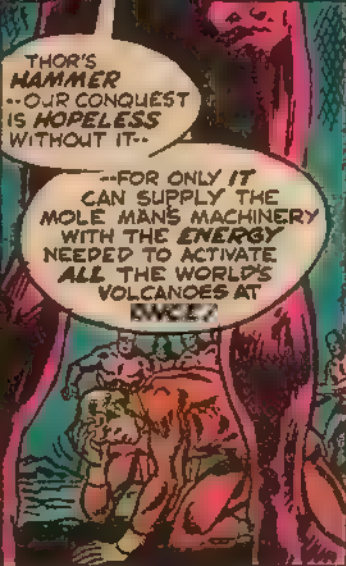
--AND EXTINGUISH
THE FLAMES OF
THE VOLATILE
JOHNNY STORM!

Iron Man and Thor are lying on the ground, looking exhausted. Iron Man is on the left, and Thor is on the right. They are surrounded by lava and debris. Iron Man is holding a small object in his hand.

FOOLISH HUMAN! I
KNOW NOT WHY YOU
ACCOMPANIED THE
ASGARDIAN TO OUR
REALM-- BUT YOU'VE
COME ONLY TO
FIND YOUR
DEATH--

--THO THE TRAP
WE SET FOR THE
GODLING THOR WAS
NOT MEANT TO
INCLUDE YOU!

T-TRAP--?
WH-WHAT ARE
YOU TALKING
ABOUT?



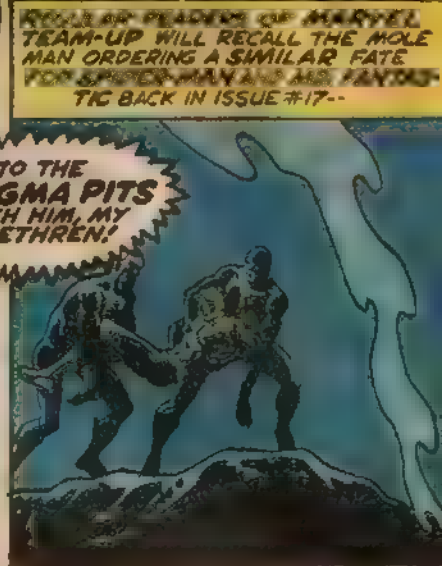
THOR'S HAMMER
--OUR CONQUEST
IS HOPELESS
WITHOUT IT--

--FOR ONLY IT
CAN SUPPLY THE
MOLE MAN'S MACHINERY
WITH THE ENERGY
NEEDED TO ACTIVATE
ALL THE WORLD'S
VOLCANOES AT
ONCE!

THAT IS WHY WE ALLOWED
MOLTO TO "ESCAPE" TO
THE SURFACE--TO CON-
TACT THOR--TO LURE
HIM TO OUR WORLD--

--AND THAT IS WHY
YOU MUST DIE!

TO THE
MAGMA PITS
WITH HIM, MY
BRETHREN!



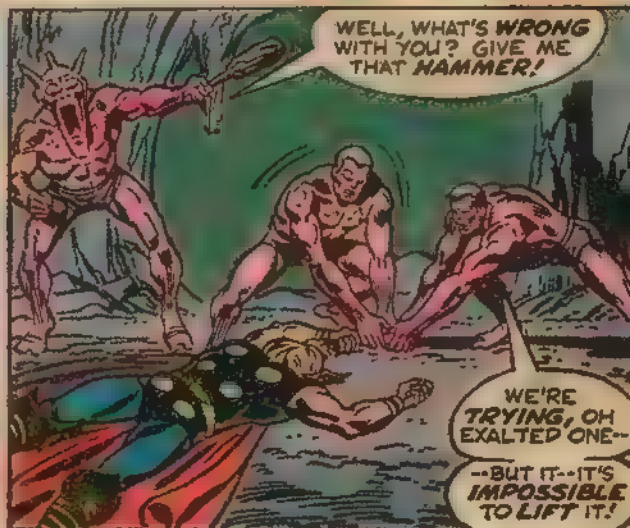
--AND THOSE SAME
FAITHFUL ONES ARE
NOW EXPECTING
JOHNNY STORM TO
PULL A SIMILAR LAST-
MISTAKE STUNT, RIGHT?



WRONG!

THE HUMAN
HAS BEEN
ELIMINATED,
MY BRETHREN!

NOW
QUICKLY
--LET US PUT
THOR'S HAMMER
TO USE!

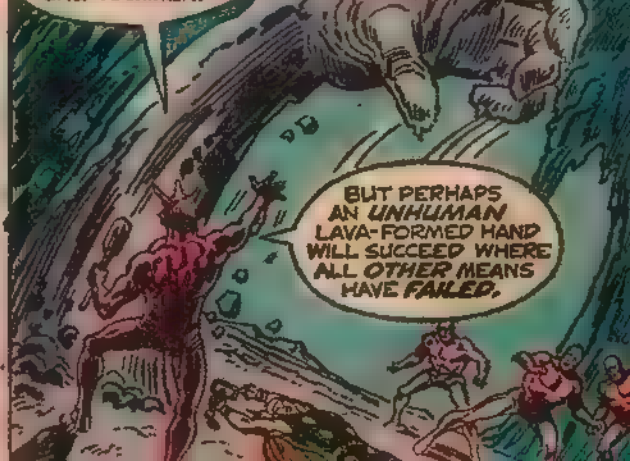


WELL, WHAT'S WRONG
WITH YOU? GIVE ME
THAT HAMMER!

WE'RE
TRYING, OH
EXALTED ONE--

--BUT IT--IT'S
IMPOSSIBLE
TO LIFT IT!

OF COURSE--I'D FORGOTTEN
THE LEGENDS! IT'S SAID
THAT NO LIVING BEING
SAVE THE THUNDER
GOD MAY LIFT HIS
URU HAMMER!



BUT PERHAPS
AN UNHUMAN
LAVA-FORMED HAND
WILL SUCCEED WHERE
ALL OTHER MEANS
HAVE FAILED.

AS IF POSSESSED OF A LIFE OF ITS OWN, THE MASSIVE HAND WRENCHES THE ENCHANTED MALLET FREE OF ITS MASTER'S LOOSELY-CLENCHED FIST--

--THEN CARRIES IT ACROSS THE ROUGH-HEWN CAVERN-- TO INSERT IT, AT LAST, INTO AN EMPTY SOCKET UPON THE MACHINERY'S GLEAMING FACE.

AND THEN...

IN PRECISELY ONE MINUTE, MY BRETHREN, THE MECHANISM WILL ATTAIN FULL POWER--

--AND I WILL THROW THE SWITCH THAT WILL SIGNAL THE DAWNING OF THE LAVA MEN'S REIGN OF CONQUEST!

THE SECONDS TICK BY-- AND THE HIGH-PITCHED HUMMING OF THE GARGANTUAN MACHINERY GROWS LOUDER, SHRILLER-- UNTIL IT ACHIEVES AN ALMOST-DEAFENING PITCH.

BY THE MOLTEN HEART OF MAGNUM! WHAT HAS HAPPENED?

FOR AN INSTANT, THE MOLE MAN'S MECHANISM SEEMS TO GLOW WITH UNMANNABLE ENERGY --AND THEN, WITHOUT WARNING--

--THE MACHINERY GOES DEAD!

IF THE THUNDER GOD IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS, I'LL... WHAT?

THOR HAS DISAPPEARED-- AND IN HIS PLACE, ANOTHER HUMAN!? WHAT?

JINKU IS STARTLED! APPARENTLY HE DOESN'T KNOW THAT WHEN MY HAMMER LEAVES MY HAND FOR MORE THAN SIXTY SECONDS--

--AND MY HAMMER BECOMES A SIMPLE WALKING STICK!--

--I BECOME DON BLAKE ONCE MORE--

THEN, WITH A SPEED BEYOND HIS INFIRMITY, THE LAME DOCTOR LUNGES FORWARD, AND...



JINKU, IN YOUR INSANE QUEST TO COMMAND THE SURFACE WORLD YOU'VE SLAIN TWO GOOD AND VALIANT MEN--

--BUT THE DEATHS OF THE HUMAN TORCH AND MOLTO SHALL NOT GO UNAVENGED!



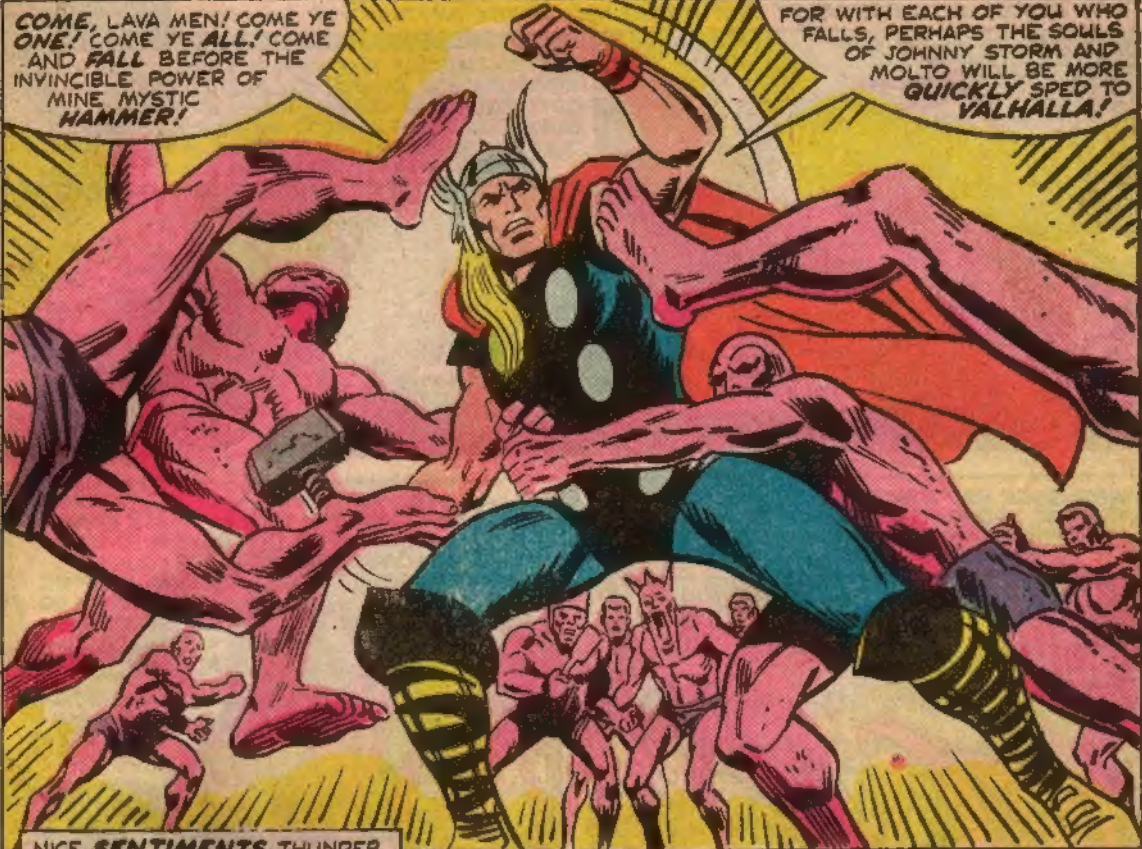
SO SWEARS THOR!



SO SWEARS THE GOD OF THUNDER!

COME, LAVA MEN! COME YE ONE! COME YE ALL! COME AND FALL BEFORE THE INVINCIBLE POWER OF MINE MYSTIC HAMMER!

FOR WITH EACH OF YOU WHO FALLS, PERHAPS THE SOULS OF JOHNNY STORM AND MOLTO WILL BE MORE QUICKLY SPED TO VALHALLA!



NICE SENTIMENTS, THUNDER GOD-- BUT I'M NOT EXACTLY READY TO STRAP ON WINGS AND A HALO JUST YET!

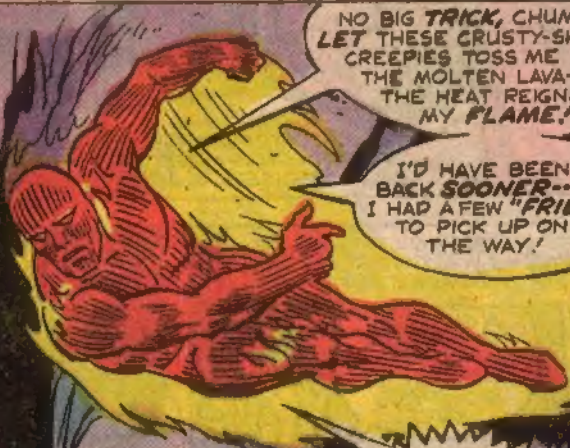


BY HEIMDALL'S EYES! WHO--?

THE HUMAN TORCH BUT NOW, BY ODIN-- NOW?

NO BIG TRICK, CHUM! I LET THESE CRUSTY-SKINNED CREEPIES TOSS ME INTO THE MOLTEN LAVA-- AND THE HEAT REIGNITED MY FLAME!

I'D HAVE BEEN BACK SOONER-- BUT I HAD A FEW "FRIENDS" TO PICK UP ON THE WAY!



OKAY MOLE GUYS-- ATTACK!



IT'S DIFFICULT TO DESCRIBE THE MAGNITUDE OF THE BATTLE THAT FOLLOWS.

TRY TO IMAGINE THE ENTIRE POPULATION OF PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND SLUGGING IT OUT TOOTH-AND-NAIL WITH EVERYONE FROM BOISE, IDAHO-- DOUBLE THE RESULT-- THEN TOSS IN THE SENSES-SHATTERING POWER OF THE HUMAN TORCH AND THOR--

--AND YOU MIGHT-- JUST MIGHT, MIND YOU-- HAVE A VAGUE IDEA OF WHAT WE'RE TALKING ABOUT.

AND SINCE YOU KNOW WHICH SIDE OUR TEAMED TWOSOME ARE FIGHTING ON IN THIS UNDERWORLD WAR--YOU CAN GUESS THE BATTLE'S INEVITABLE OUTCOME.

ENOUGH, MY LAVA MEN!

YOU HAVE CONDUCTED YOURSELVES PROUDLY-- BUT THE STRUGGLE IS LOST!

60 LAVA MEN--RETURN IN PEACE TO THE DEPTHS THOU DOST CALL HOME-- FOR THY DREAMS OF CONQUEST ARE HOLLOW DREAMS, IN TRUTH!

ONCE BEFORE HAVE I SPOKEN THIS TO THEE-- I TRUST I SHALL NOT BE FORCED TO DO SO AGAIN.

WE UNDERSTAND, THOR-- AND WE SHALL DO AS YOU SAY!

BUT MY VISION-- MY PROMISE OF SUCCESS--! WHAT WENT WRONG? WHY DID THE DREAM BETRAY ME?

A QUESTION TO PONDER JINKU. AYE, A QUESTION TO PONDER, INDEED.

AND IN A SHADOWED ROOM, SOMEWHERE FAR AWAY-- THEY LISTEN TO THE WITCH DOCTOR'S WORDS-- AND STRUGGLE TO SURPRESS THEIR LAUGHTER.

IT HAS BEEN FUN, THIS LATEST LITTLE GAME OF POWER-- AND THERE ARE OTHER DAYS-- OTHER GAMES-- AGAIN.

NEXT ISSUE!

SPIDER-MAN BATTLES THE HULK!